

Spring 1-15-2000

ENG 3701-001: American Romanticism

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3701-001



001
English 3701 – ~~002~~ American Romanticism

Purpose: As stated in the General Catalog, English 3701 focuses on American works produced from about 1830-1860. The period comprises what F.O. Matthiessen called the “American Renaissance,” a time of extraordinary literary expression from the likes of Ralph Waldo Emerson, Henry David Thoreau, Edgar Allan Poe, Nathaniel Hawthorne, Herman Melville, and Walt Whitman. Because the period had a long foregrounding in the earlier writings of the age, we will also examine the literature that preceded the 1830’s. Such a procedure will allow us to see the larger context in which the major figures responded so powerfully to an earlier outcry for American literary nationalism. Among the themes we will touch on during the semester are the significance of “NATURE,” the centrality of the individual, the importance of creative imagination, the image and function of the noble savage, the uses of gothic artifice, the promises and dangers of American democracy, and the intellectual and cultural undercurrents that began to erode Romantic idealism – the whole Romantic movement. We will study the literature not only to increase our appreciation for its aesthetic merits but also to consider its abiding relevance to our society.

Scope: During the semester you will read a wide range of essays, stories, novels (“romances”), works of personal record, and poems. Your performance will be evaluated by means of a final essay examination, a series of pop quizzes, and a critical essay of at least eight pages, not including “Notes” and “Works Cited.” The final will include two parts. Part I will require you to write two paragraph-length responses (120-150 words each) based on two of three items; Part II will require you to write an essay (about 500 words) based on one of three items. During the semester, you will write at least eight responses about topics and questions that I will pose in class, usually at the beginning of class. These responses must be supported by evidence and reasoning. In addition, you will prepare a typewritten critical essay of 7 to 8 eight pages of argument. In your critical essay, which you must hand in at class on the last day of class, you will attempt to provide an extended answer to a critical question about a range of poems, a range of stories, and/or a major work. I will hand out “Guidelines” to provide additional information.

Components of the Grade

- Final (30%):
- Eight Written Responses of 250-300 words each (30%)
- Critical Essay of 8-10 Pages of Argument (40%)

Grading: When I evaluate written work for your final examination and critical essay, I consider content, coherence, grammar, and mechanics. By content I mean a relationship between purpose, reasoning, and evidence. By coherence I mean an orderly unfolding of ideas and evidence in your argument, as well as smooth transitions and clear language. By grammar I mean the use of standard English rules and syntax in the construction of sentences. And by mechanics I mean standard punctuation. Of course, content is most important, but a written performance, especially the critical essay, can receive a low grade, even a failing grade, if it is radically incoherent or riddled with errors of grammar and/or mechanics.

Missed Work: If you miss a quiz, you will not be permitted to take it later. However, if you have an excused absence, I will not count the quiz in your average. Should you miss a major examination, you may take a make-up examination only if you have an excused absence. **Note:** An excused absence requires a confirmation from the Health Service, a university official, or a doctor. I expect you to turn in your critical essay on time. If you fail to do so, your essay will pay a five-point penalty for each of the first two days. After two days, I will not accept the essay.

Absence Policy: Class attendance is important. During class, I will often provide information about literary history, theory, and criticism – information that you should learn in a course about American Romanticism. Moreover, your participation in discussion and questioning, even as a listener, is an important learning experience that distinguishes classroom education from correspondence school and self-education. For these reasons and others, your grade will be deducted 10% after three unexcused absences and 5% for each unexcused absence thereafter. For an excused absence, you must provide verification from the Health Service, a physician, or an appropriate member of Eastern's faculty or staff.

Students With Disabilities: If you have a documented disability and wish to receive academic accommodations, please contact the Coordinator of the Office of Disability Services (581-6583) as soon as possible.

TENTATIVE SCHEDULE

THE PIONEERS

1. Week of January 10
 - Introduction to course
 - Lecture: The Literary-Historical Context; Freneau's "The Power of Fancy" (514-19), "The Hurricane" (525-26), "The Wild Honey Suckle" (529-30), "The Indian Burying Ground" (530-31)
 - Irving, "The Author's Account of Himself" (606-8), "Rip Van Winkle" (608-19)
2. Week of January 17
 - King's Birthday: No Classes
 - Bryant, "Thanotopsis" (928-32), "A Forest Hymn" (606-8), "The Prairies" (940-42)
 - Cooper, The Last of the Mohicans ("Author's Introduction" and Chapters I through V)

3. Week of January 24

- The Last of the Mohicans (Chapters VI through XIV)
- The Last of the Mohicans (Chapters XVI through XXIV)
- The Last of the Mohicans (Chapters XXV through XXXIII)

THE TRANSCENDENTALISTS

4. Week of January 31

- Emerson, from Nature (1040-44, 1048-52), "The American Scholar" (1067-79)
- "The Rhodora" (1145), "Each and All" (1146-47), "The Snow-Storm" (1147), "The Problem" (1148-49)
- "Uriel" (1152-53), "Hamatreya" (1156-58), "Days" (1159)

5. Week of February 7

- Emerson, "Self-Reliance" (1079-1106)
- from Walden (1554-56, 1571-1621)
- Lincoln's Birthday: No Classes

6. Week of February 14

- from Walden (1655-89, 1719-36)
- Fuller, Woman in the Nineteenth Century (5-47)
- Woman in the Nineteenth Century (47-105)

THE GOTHICS

7. Week of February 21

- Hawthorne, "My Kinsman, Major Molineux" (1161-76), "Young Goodman Brown" (1176-85)
- "The Maypole of Merry Mount" (1185-92), "The Minister's Black Veil" (1192-1200), "The Birthmark" (1201-1211)
- "Rappaccini's Daughter" (1211-1230), "Ethan Brand" (1245-1255)

8. Week of February 28

- The Blithedale Romance (to 117)
- The Blithedale Romance (117-85)
- The Blithedale Romance (185-51)

9. Week of March 6

- Poe, "Sonnet—To Science" (944-48), "To Helen" (949), "Israfel" (949-51), "The Sleeper" (951-52), "Dream Land" (955-56)
- "Ulalume—A Ballad" (959-62), "A Dream Within a Dream" (962), "Annabel Lee" (963- 64)
- "The Raven" (956-59), "The Philosophy of Composition" (1027-35); **Proposals Due**

SPRING BREAK!

10. Week of March 20

- “Ligeia” (964-74), “The Fall of the House of Usher” (947-57)
- “The Masque of the Red Death” (987-91), “The Tell-Tale Heart” (991-94), “The Cask of Amontillado” (1019-1023)
- “The Purloined Letter” (1003-1015), from “Twice Told Tales” (1024-1027);

11. Week of March 27

- Moby-Dick (“Etymology,” “Extracts,” Chapters I through XXV)
- Moby-Dick (Chapters XXV through L)
- Moby-Dick (Chapters L-LXXIII)

12. Week of April 3

- Moby-Dick (Chapters LXXIV through XCII)
- Moby-Dick (Chapters XCIII through CXXIII)
- Moby-Dick (Chapters CXXI through “Epilogue”)

13. Week of April 10

- “Bartleby, the Scrivener” (1390-1416)
- “Benito Cereno” (1416-1439)
- “Benito Cereno” (1440-70)

14. Week of April 17

- “The Paradise of Bachelors and the Tartarus of Maids” (1470-1485)
- Billy Budd, Sailor (1485-1511)
- Billy Budd, Sailor (1511-38); **Critical Essay Due in Class**

15. Week of April 24

- Whitman, from “Song of Myself” (1866-67, 1892-89, 1904-15, 1931-36)
- “Out of the Cradle Endlessly Rocking” (1948-53), “The Wound-Dresser” (1961-63)
- Student Evaluations; Examination Topics

Final Examination: To Be Announced